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Chair: Mr. Messone ..... (Gabon)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.08 p.m.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Committee

1. **Mr. Jeremić** (Serbia), President of the General Assembly, commending the Committee for proceeding with its work efficiently and on schedule, said that in 1945, when the United Nations had been established, almost a third of the world's population had lived under colonial administration, whereas in 2012 only 16 Territories, with 2 million people living in them, were officially classified as Non-Self-Governing. The Committee's efforts to bring the issue to closure were truly praiseworthy. It was to be hoped that the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would be the last.

2. In his address to the General Assembly at the opening of the session, he had spoken of the need to strengthen the role of United Nations peacekeeping, another item on the Committee's agenda. Peacekeeping, 60 years of which had cost less than six weeks of current global military spending, was complex and evolving, and the African Union was playing a growing role in conflict prevention and resolution across that continent, as were other regional actors such as the European Union.

3. Regarding the situation in the Middle East, and the much-discussed issue of Palestine in particular, which the Committee would be considering, there was resounding support for a two-State solution that took into account the legitimate concerns of Israel and Palestine. Some Member States had called in the plenary Assembly for the United Nations to play a more decisive role. There were many delicate political aspects to the problem, but it was also essential to focus on the humanitarian one. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) played a vital role in providing basic services to a community of approximately 5 million registered refugees scattered throughout the Middle East. However, the Agency was underfunded and there was a serious cash deficit, making it increasingly unable to keep pace with the growing needs of the community it served. Though he was well aware of the budgetary constraints of the Member States, he also wanted to remind them that millions of Palestinian refugees depended on their generosity to UNRWA.

4. In conclusion, he encouraged the Fourth Committee to continue to reach compromise solutions on all the contentious issues with which it dealt.

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (A/67/21, 62 and 307)

5. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report on its thirty-fourth session (A/67/21). During the Committee's general debate, members had focused on a wide range of issues, including the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice. Other points emphasized had been the utilization of new information and communications technologies, including new media, in promoting the work of the United Nations, together with continued reliance on traditional media; the need to close the digital technology gap between developed and developing countries; the importance of freedom of the press and of expression; the need to achieve linguistic parity in the work of the Department; the Department's laudable efforts to fight racism, bigotry and intolerance, and what it should do to facilitate dialogue among cultures and civilizations; budgetary support for the good work being done by the United Nations information centres; and the expansion of the Department's ties with academic institutions. The last chapter of the report included two draft resolutions on questions relating to information.

6. **Mr. Launsky-Tieffenthal** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/67/307), acknowledged the importance of the guidance given by the Fourth Committee and the Committee on Information to the Department of Public Information in its efforts to reach the widest possible audience as it publicized the work of the Organization and pursued greater understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples.

7. Any successful public information and communications programme must be strategic, results-oriented, and transparent. His Department's strategy was guided by three considerations: it sought to harness the power of all media, including social media, digital platforms, print, radio and television; it aimed to strengthen international support for the United

Nations by engaging in interactive dialogue with Member States and their publics; and it prioritized multilingualism, encouraging departments and offices to produce materials in all six official languages, and in many more where possible.

8. In the second half of 2012, following the period covered by the report, the opening of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly and a number of parallel high-level events had enabled the Department to work with Member States to spotlight some critical issues. The well-publicized launch by the Secretary-General of the MDG Gap Task Force Report 2012 had resulted in the publication of more than 400 articles worldwide in the first 24 hours; and the media coverage mobilized by the Department for the meeting of the MDG Advocacy Group had also been very positive. More recently, the Department had worked with the United Nations Development Programme, the Millennium Campaign, and other partners to raise awareness via social media about Millennium Development Goal successes and opportunities before 2015.

9. Media services provided by the Department during the General Assembly's plenary debate and the various high-level events on issues such as sustainable energy, climate change or Africa Week observances had been extensive: 250 news stories had been published on the United Nations News Centre website in English and French alone, 310 events had been covered by United Nations Photo; there had been continuous live streaming of the debate and some 180 high-level events by United Nations Television (UNTV) and its webcast team; and about 50 Assembly-related television segments had been created by UNifeed for satellite and online news distribution, and over 400 interviews with world leaders and United Nations officials and live recordings of meetings uploaded for use by broadcasters worldwide. There had been positive feedback from Member States.

10. As a complement to traditional media, the Department made extensive use of online social networks like Facebook and Twitter. The United Nations had large numbers of fans in the developing world, particularly in Brazil, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Mexico. Pinterest, a popular social media platform for grouping images by theme, had been used in September's High-Level Meeting on the Rule of Law to post photos with captions and links to United Nations activities around the world. During the General Assembly, a new blog was informing people how they could watch and take part in various activities and events. Other social media accounts such as Google+, which had recently passed the 600,000-follower milestone, had allowed young people to take part in online "hangouts" on issues relevant to them in the lead-up to World Youth Day. Freedom of the press, freedom of information, and independent, diverse and pluralistic media remained as essential as eve.

11. The United Nations News Centre portal, one of the most heavily visited on the Organization's website, had been redesigned and was now more visually attractive, simpler to navigate and easier to use on mobile devices. The English and French versions were up and running, and the other language versions were expected to be ready shortly. The Security Council website had also been redesigned in all six official languages. Furthermore, the Department's webcast coverage of intergovernmental meetings was now available in the language of the speaker and in English translation, and some videos on the UNTV website and on the United Nations Channel on YouTube were closed-captioned in as many as six languages. The Department had expanded its global multilingual reach through partnerships with Deutsche Welle, the PBS News Hour, USA Today, All Nippon Airways and the United Nations Foundation, while United Nations Radio was broadcasting in Kiswahili and Portuguese as well as the six official languages.

12. Educational outreach to young people remained a key priority: the Model United Nations workshop held at Headquarters in August had brought together more than 50 participants from 28 countries to learn about the role and work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and there were plans to add an annual workshop away from Headquarters. The International Day of Peace on 21 September was another observance that had targeted students and youth, with input from the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Liberia and South Sudan. Even the Organization's youngest supporters — and future leaders of the world — had been included in the Department's outreach through a special United Nations tour aimed at children. Under the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, another project brought computer programmers at Rutgers University and United Nations language experts together to develop learning tools that could be used in mobile devices, teaching both a language and facts about the

United Nations. Other partnerships had been developed with over 850 universities and research institutions throughout the world.

13. The NGO Relations website had been redesigned and its navigation improved, and new formats for the regular briefings were being explored. Department of Public Information/NGO conferences had thus far been held in Paris, Mexico City, Melbourne and Bonn. A series of briefings on documentation for Member State delegations had also been arranged through the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

14. The Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme for young journalists from developing countries or countries with economies in transition enjoyed great support among Member States. In 2012, for the first time, the fellows had travelled to Geneva to learn about the humanitarian, human rights and health work of the United Nations. Elsewhere, at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, in partnership with the Hungarian and Swedish missions, had organized a Raoul Wallenberg commemoration in the past month.

15. The Department continued to find new ways to operate and adapt in the fast-changing media and communications environment, while reducing costs. The use of print-on-demand technology, for example, ensured that United Nations publications were readily available at significantly reduced costs. Traditional publications continued, with web-based versions. In addition, the Department had signed over 30 agreements with local publishers for the translation or co-publication of 38 United Nations publications in 17 languages, at zero or negligible cost to the Organization.

16. Furthermore, the Department responded rapidly to peace and security crises. It was working closely to ensure that the United Nations entities dealing with the Sahel, and Mali in particular, had the communications support they needed. As the crisis in Syria continued to unfold, the Department was using its United Nations information centres across the Middle East and North Africa to provide communications support, particularly in the form of Arabic-language outreach and media monitoring.

17. The global network of 63 United Nations information centres served as a vital link connecting people to the United Nations. The centres worked in the six official languages, and produced information materials in 39 other languages. The Department was grateful for the host-country contributions to the centres, including rent-free premises. However, security remained a major concern in many locations, and the Department was constantly looking for options to ensure the safety of its staff.

18. The Department was responsible for explaining the work and value of the United Nations, and that was best accomplished by working with the Member States. Their essential faith in the United Nations had not wavered, but they must work even more closely together to ensure that the peoples of the world shared that faith. The Department pledged to join forces with Member States in projecting a common vision for the strength and promise of the United Nations.

19. **The Chair** invited delegations to ask the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information any questions that they might have.

20. **Mr. Benmehdi** (Algeria) said that there was room for improvement in one respect: there was no convenient way for delegations to identify accredited press correspondents at Headquarters. The long-serving correspondents were well known, but there were many new ones. Perhaps the Department could issue a brochure or electronic bulletin that would enable representatives to identify them immediately.

21. **Mr. Launsky-Tieffenthal** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) thanked the representative of Algeria for his suggestion and said that the Department of Public Information would look into the matter.

22. **Mr. Benmehdi** (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that notwithstanding the progress that had been made in the area of public information, many developing countries struggled to gain access to information on United Nations activities for want of resources and technical means. The Department of Public Information should continue trying to overcome those challenges so as to reach the widest possible audience. Its campaigns on issues of great importance to the international community, including the question of Palestine, were laudable. It should also work with the Special Committee on decolonization to raise awareness of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and continue encouraging more media coverage of the work of the General Assembly.

23. The United Nations information centres were faced with the problems of ageing office equipment and lack of cost-effective access to adequate electronic systems. Offers from Member States of rent-free premises for the centres were welcome, but such support was not a substitute for full funding from the regular United Nations budget. The prospective information centre in Luanda should be established without delay, and any decision on reorganizing the centres should be made in consultation with the host countries and in keeping with the regional needs.

24. Despite the Department's efforts, the disparity in the use of the official languages in its website persisted. The availability of the United Nations peacekeeping website in all six languages was most welcome. But daily press releases, for example, should also be in all six official languages, and the Department would do well to find a creative way of accomplishing that, within existing resources. Lastly, there was room for improvement in the operations and services of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library; the establishment of an institutional digital repository and the improvement of access to external electronic resources would be useful steps.

25. The traditional radio and print media should, nevertheless, continue to be used, for they were the primary means of communication in many developing countries.

26. **Mr. Sinhaseni** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the activities undertaken by the Department of Public Information during the first half of 2012, as illustrated by the report, offered an impressive snapshot of an entire year dedicated to varied, innovative and far-reaching worldwide programming. In particular, ASEAN applauded the Department's strategy for publicizing key issues like the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference), the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding — in which ASEAN members were critically invested — and human rights. The many activities conducted under the United Nations Academic Impact initiative were an excellent way to engage the world's young people early on in the work and goals of the Organization and the international community.

27. Encouraging multilingualism was of particular significance to the United Nations in its efforts to promote the widest possible access to information. Important documents must appear in the Organization's six official languages and should be made available through the United Nations website without delay. Every effort must also be made to ensure that the website was accessible by persons with various types of disabilities. However, although new media and digital platforms presented exciting and effective opportunities to reach more people, the need for traditional media, particularly in developing countries, was still high. The work the Department had done to bridge that digital divide was admirable, as in its frequent live broadcasting in all official languages on United Nations Radio. Misinformation could have serious real-world repercussions. ASEAN therefore supported the role of the United Nations media as a news centre where the dissemination of information was accurate, reliable and free of bias.

28. ASEAN itself was fostering a greater sense of community among the diverse cultures of the region, and it had a plan of action to mainstream regional identity and values in national communications plans and educational curricula.

29. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), highlighted the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting the ad hoc thematic debates held by the General Assembly and said that it was vital to maintain objectivity, impartiality, accuracy and consistency in the messages conveyed by the United Nations. CELAC also called on the Department to continue updating its communications network so that it would serve effectively to coordinate any emergency response by the United Nations system to natural disasters, the by favouring multilateral action over unilateral measures.

30. While CELAC appreciated the spontaneity and agility of electronic communication and its high potential for inclusive, non-discriminatory access and for exchange of information in a multiplicity of ways, it was also concerned about the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries. Traditional media such as radio, television and the press should therefore also continue to be used to convey the messages of the Organization.

31. The invaluable work being done by the United Nations information centres to bring familiarity with the United Nations to all parts of the world was a crucial part of the Department's global outreach, and they deserved support. The projected Luanda centre should be put into operation as soon as possible as a service to the Portuguese-speaking African countries.

32. For the United Nations, multilingualism was inherent, and at least the traditional media should convey information in as many world languages as possible. However, much remained to be done in order to reach the necessary parity among all six official languages on the Organization's website. The time had come to make progress in that regard, and, as a first step, all press releases should be available in all official languages. The Department should design a mechanism to make that possible, perhaps initially — in view of the financial constraints — by rotating the languages used. CELAC welcomed the fact that the draft resolution on questions relating to information accommodated that concern; and it also welcomed the accessibility of the website in all official languages to persons with disabilities.

33. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press were democratic values in any society, but they should be exercised responsibly by national media in accordance with international law and in the public interest. Any tampering with the airways of other nations was a matter of concern.

34. **Mr. Charles** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), commended the Department of Public Information for the progress it had made in developing its multimedia website, as well as for the activities it had carried out throughout the world to promote awareness of the Rio+20 Conference, the Millennium Development Goals, gender issues, action against racism, peacekeeping, disarmament, rule of law and counter-terrorism, and other significant issues on the United Nations agenda.

35. The United Nations information centres were poised to reach the communities they served directly, in a local cultural context. It was regrettable that the Secretary-General's report had not reflected the many important initiatives conducted by the Trinidad and Tobago Centre in the Caribbean region, serving 19 territories in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The staffing and funding of all the information centres should be such as to enable them to operate effectively. During the past year, the Centre had continued to publicize and promote United Nations campaigns, commemorations and observances, and had featured events connected with the current session of the General Assembly. It had provided media support in areas such as action against arms trafficking, human development and security, violence against women, human rights and action against racism.

36. The Department of Public Information had assisted admirably in the commemoration of the current year's celebration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It was also important for it to continue disseminating information on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, which continued to retard the social and economic development of the region. Lastly, recognizing the invaluable contributions of women in the promotion and maintenance of peace and security, CARICOM believed that the Department should step up its efforts to publicize and encourage action by women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

37. **Ms. Riddy-O'Dowd** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, commended the continued efforts of the Department of Public Information to carry out its work and promote the ideals of the United Nations in a manner that was understandable and accessible to all. The public outreach surrounding the recent Rio+20 Conference, for example, had successfully mobilized large-scale awareness and participation, particularly via United Nations social media platforms. The network of United Nations information centres had helped to multiply the impact of that effort; and the centres should be systematically involved in all United Nations campaigns as a means to spread the values of the Organization.

38. The European Union supported the Department's planned focus on certain priority areas for the Organization, such as the elaboration of the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, in which the use of social media would be instrumental. New information and communications technologies and

social media were powerful means of enabling citizens and interested groups to disseminate information and views, spread awareness, mobilize action and put pressure on decision makers. Although use of traditional media should not be neglected, the United Nations website was becoming the most important tool to inform citizens worldwide in a cost-effective, environmentally friendly and accessible way.

39. Cooperation with other departments, especially those bringing voices from the field on situations requiring special coverage, should continue to be cultivated. The Department should be guided in all its activities by the principles of the United Nations relating to freedom of the press and information, and to the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, all the more legitimate in the digital age. Freedom of expression helped promote peace, spur sustainable development and alleviate poverty, and made governments more responsive. That was why both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council had in recent resolutions urged governments to ensure that journalists — close to a thousand of whom had been killed in the last decade, almost 50 of them in the past year alone — could work safely and freely.

40. The European Union and its member States — with 23 official languages and many regional and minority languages — protected linguistic diversity. Multilingualism at the United Nations was a fundamental feature of multilateralism, and also of transparency and sustainable action. There should be further exploration of regional, local and academic partnerships to advance the use of all six official languages, and to make United Nations information accessible also to persons who used mobile platforms or who lacked reliable broadband access, as the Organization expanded its outreach to new audiences.

41. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that news was sometimes more than a report of events; it had been known to contribute to world events, even precipitating them. Information had become a decisive factor in politics and economics. Thus, the role played by the Department of Public Information and the United Nations information centres in spreading information about decolonization, the culture of peace, the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development was particularly crucial in the contemporary context.

42. Sudan was concerned about the widening digital divide between developing and developed nations, which carried with it the risk of greater social disparities. Accordingly, it would be desirable for the Department to intensify its efforts to achieve linguistic parity among the official languages, especially in the daily press releases.

43. In the contemporary world, information was often misleading and selective and served ulterior purposes. It was necessary, therefore, to counter the effects of photography, writing and art that attacked human dignity or denigrated religion and religious symbols, thereby doing a disservice to the tolerance and mutual respect for which the United Nations stood. It was important that the Department should seek to develop a culture of peace. Sudan appreciated the Department's commitment to the question of Palestine and called for the intensification of efforts in that regard.

44. **Mr. León González** (Cuba) said that the science of communications had developed with dizzying speed in the last few decades. However, the use of information technologies could mean a threat to international peace and security and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as its benefits were still far from reaching the majority of the world's inhabitants. Only 37 per cent of the world's population had Internet access, according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Even if there were universal access to information and communications technologies, it would not help the close to 1 billion people without literacy, the 400 million living in extreme poverty, or the 759 million who were hungry, or, for that matter, the 1.5 billion without electric power. Even a small part of the colossal amount spent on weapons could help bridge that digital divide.

45. The United Nations information centres throughout the world were, especially in the developing countries, central to bringing balanced information to local audiences. The use of radio should be enhanced to provide information to the large illiterate populations in the countries of the South. Information technologies in general should be used to close the social as well as the digital divide.

46. Cuba denounced the radio and television aggression being conducted against it by the United States Government and demanded that it cease its illicit broadcasts and interference with the frequencies used by Cuban broadcasters. It had been repeatedly

requested to do so by the ITU. The thousands of hours of false and offensive propaganda beamed at Cuba from the United States every week were financed by Congressional appropriations and were part of its economic blockade against the Cuban people. That aggression had cost the country dearly by preventing its direct access to information technology and services.

47. **Ms. Martínez** (Mexico) said that it was only with timely, objective and accurate information that the work of the United Nations could be understood in all parts of the world. Mexico acknowledged the ongoing effort by the Department of Public Information to reach people through electronic social networks, and supported the use of the new media in order to communicate information in real time, and ensure that it would benefit from a multiplier effect.

48. While such new technologies should certainly be used to the maximum extent, the digital divide was a source of concern. Accordingly, the United Nations should continue to use traditional media as well, and in different languages, in order to ensure that its communications were fully accessible.

49. Access to information was basic to the enjoyment of human rights, to education and to socioeconomic development. A greater effort should be made to enhance multilingualism and the parity of all six official languages in all communications produced by the Organization; in particular, there should be more Spanish-language material. Given the high degree of technical detail in the issues addressed during thematic debates, the Organization should continue to provide multilingual glossaries and definitions. In that connection the United Nations Information Centre in Mexico City had produced a multilingual document that had been highly useful during the Rio+20 Conference.

50. **Mr. dos Santos** (Brazil) said that in order to reach out to a linguistically diverse world and ensure accountability, the United Nations message needed to be delivered in as many languages as possible. The dedicated work of the Portuguese Unit of United Nations Radio was commendable, as was the outreach of the United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro to the local media, NGOs, universities and government bodies. United Nations information centres were often the very first field presence of the Organization in many Member States, and they remained an essential element of United Nations public information activities, especially in developing countries. Brazil wholeheartedly welcomed the planned opening of the Luanda Information Centre in Angola to serve the needs of Portuguese-speaking African countries. The information centre network and the Department of Public Information had been notably successful in their media campaign on behalf of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the outcome of the Conference should now be publicized.

51. Brazil was convinced of the importance of promoting both traditional and new media. A mutually supportive combination of the two should be used to address the pressing issues of the day. Traditional means of communication were still the most far-reaching vehicle for the messages of the United Nations. The dynamic new media, on the other hand, improved the Organization's networking capacity and provided timely information to a range of actors.

52. The Department should find new ways to support the activities on the ground that were indispensable to the success of peacekeeping missions, all of them requiring fluid and constant contact with the local population. Also, its special information programme on the question of Palestine was creating a dialogue among journalists, activists, academics and policymakers that might foster innovative and grass-roots initiatives for peace in the Middle East, just as its outreach programme on the Holocaust and its efforts against prejudice were contributing to a culture of peace.

53. The Department had an important role to play in preserving the historical memory of the United Nations. Its initiative to increase online access to information about Member States and their positions deserved support, as did the progress it had made in the retrospective digitization of United Nations documents. Preserving institutional memory and learning lessons from it would be instrumental in the Organization's future work.

54. **Ms. Abu** (Israel) said that the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme was of the utmost importance. Holocaust denial was still being voiced even in respectable forums, a painful reminder of the importance of Holocaust education. The iWitness website, an initiative launched by the Shoah Foundation Institute at the University of Southern

California, which had been showcased by the Outreach Programme in early 2012, allowed students from around the world to learn the personal stories of more than 1,000 victims. Other events organized by the Programme had focused on the Eichmann trial, and on the life and legacy of Raoul Wallenberg. It was essential to make every effort to preserve and strengthen the Programme.

55. Israel remained concerned about the special information programme on the question of Palestine, which had been created by an anti-Israel resolution that set forth a one-sided narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The resolution ignored the conflict's complex nature and promoted the dissemination of biased and misleading information that served only to deepen animosity between the parties. Given the one-sided mandate, Israeli officials would neither attend nor participate in seminars under the special information programme until a more even-handed approach was adopted; but Israel was ready to engage in the formulation of a more constructive resolution mandating future activities fostering peace education, tolerance, mutual understanding and the prevention of incitement.

56. **Mr. Mansour** (Lebanon), said that the Department of Public Information, the voice of the United Nations on key global issues, should strike a balance between the new media enabling the rapid spread of information across boundaries and the traditional media, both of which ensured the free flow of meaningful information. The principles of freedom of the press and information and of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media remained as valid as ever: attacks against journalists were to be condemned, and all Member States should ensure that they could work freely and effectively.

57. The Department's highlighting of the Rio+20 Conference had been outstanding, and his Government had worked closely with the Beirut Information Centre in that effort, as on many others, such as the important task of raising awareness about United Nations peacekeeping operations. Lebanon urged the Department to continue lending support to both the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support; and it welcomed the fact that the peacekeeping website was available in all six official languages. In addition, the Department should intensify its efforts to raise awareness of the Palestinian issue, through its crucial special information programme on the question of Palestine, which was furthering efforts for peace in the Middle East.

58. The work of the Committee on Information represented an opportunity to advocate the transformation of free information into liberating knowledge, and the translation of knowledge into just power. Over the past year, Arab young people had used information tools like the social media to call for freedom, dignity, democracy, and a better future. Journalists, too, had played an important role in galvanizing support. In the words of Tawakkul Karman, the Yemeni journalist and activist who had been awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, no voice could drown out the voice of freedom and dignity.

59. **Mr. Aldhamanoi** (United Arab Emirates) said that balanced information was crucial to strengthening the principles of peace and sustainable development. Developed countries and international media organizations had a responsibility to provide assistance to developing nations so that they could benefit from modern technologies. His delegation called for the preparation of an international charter on information that would define the legal criteria governing the dissemination of information in a way that guaranteed objectivity, transparency and credibility, as well as respect for all religions and heritages, while rejecting extremism.

60. The efforts of the Department of Public Information to convey the noble message of the United Nations were praiseworthy. However, it was necessary for it to expand the dissemination of knowledge via television and radio as well as the Internet, and to focus on using all six official languages, particularly Arabic, in all its activities. The United Arab Emirates had no doubt about the important role of information in people's consciousness, and consequently had adopted a systematic, balanced media policy that aimed to develop technological research while addressing national and regional humanitarian issues.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.